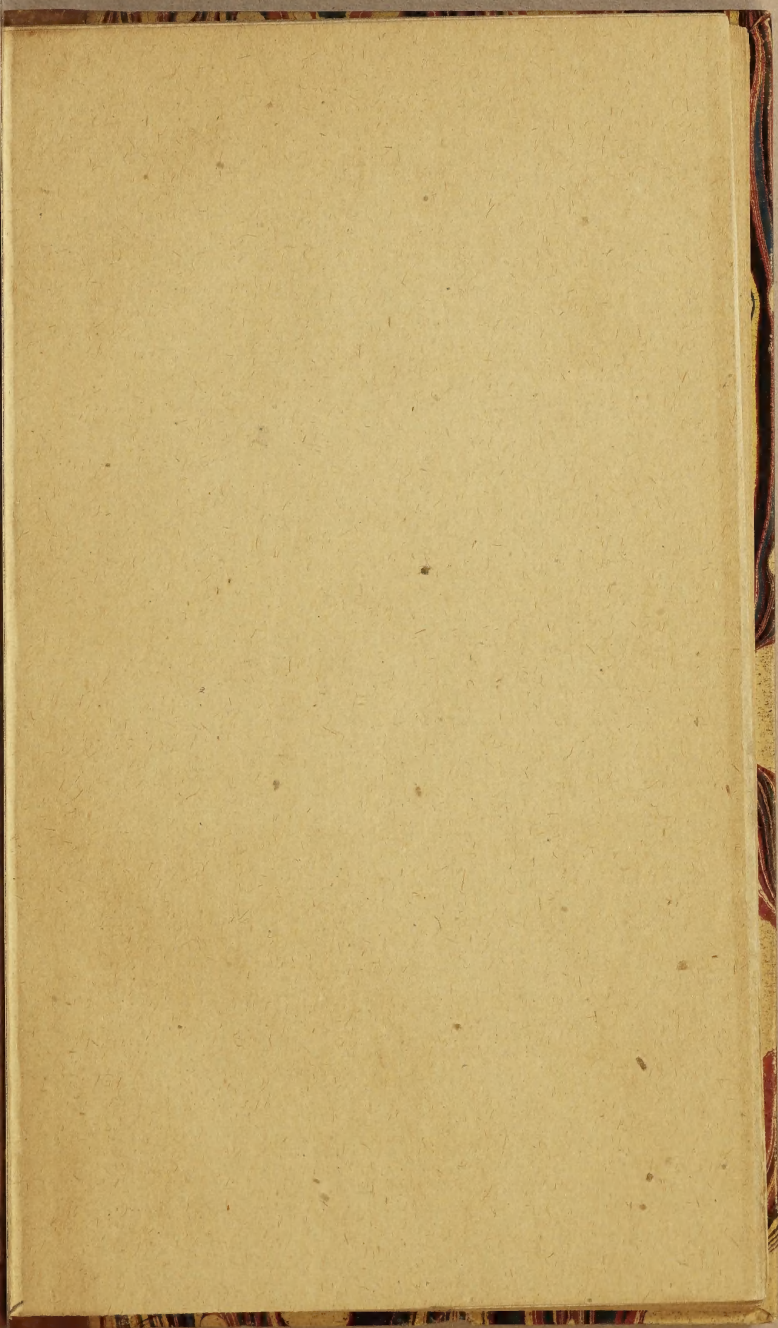






John Carter Brown.



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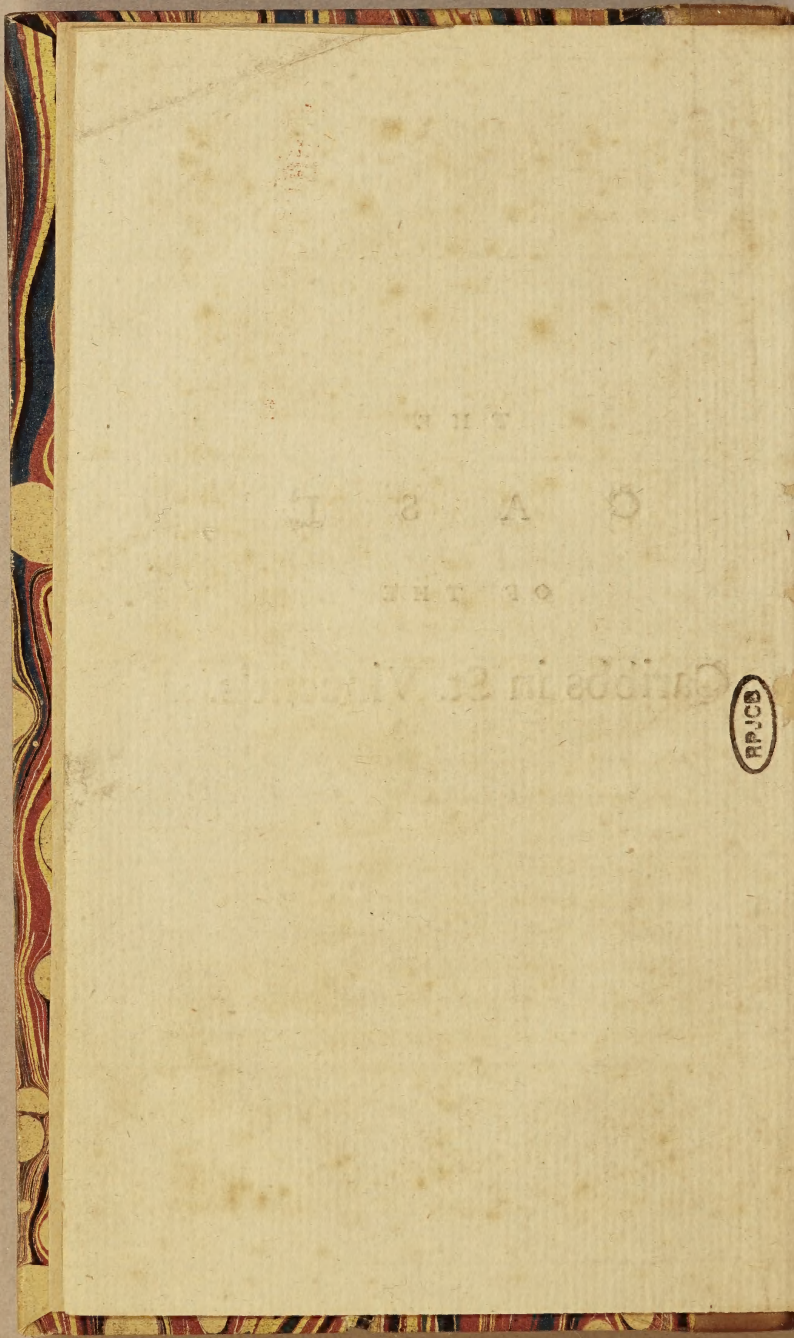
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THE
C A S E
OF THE
Caribbs in St. Vincent's.

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RPJCB

JOHN CARTER BROWN

T H E
C A S E, &c.

THE Reverend *Thomas Coke*, Doctor of Civil Law, late of *Jesus College* in *Oxford*, a *Presbyter* of the Church of *England*, and Superintendent of the *Methodist Societies* in *America*, sailed from *Gravesend* in the autumn of last year for the province of *Nova Scotia*; but was driven by stress of weather to the *West Indies*. He then embraced the opportunity which Providence afforded him, of visiting several of the islands: and having three ministers with him, he fixed them in three of the islands as *Missionaries* to the poor *Negroes*, to many of whom they have been rendered remarkably useful. In the course of his visits he spent some time in the island of *St. Vincent*. During his continuance there, the miserable and wretched state of the poor savage *Caribbs*, who are utterly destitute of every privilege enjoyed by civil society, affected him much; and, upon

an application to the legislative body of the island, a grant was given of one hundred and fifty acres of valuable land on the borders of the *Caribb* country, for the purpose of raising a School-house, and a dwelling-house for the teacher or teachers, for the civilization and pious education of the children of the *Caribbs*. A negotiation was also entered into with the *Caribbs* themselves, who at last, through the recommendation and influence of some planters whom they respected, consented to send their children to be instructed in the *English* language, the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, and such other branches of education, as may render them useful members of society, both in the religious and commercial world. Two teachers, well qualified for the work, are now provided, who, from motives of humanity, are willing to enter on the laborious task of educating the poor savage children abovementioned.

This institution is so manifestly calculated to produce the most salutary effects, whether it be considered in a political, commercial, or more general point of view, especially as founded on the motives of true benevolence and philanthropy, that little need be urged to influence the true lovers of mankind in general, and of their country

country in particular, to reach forth their kind assisting hand for its establishment and support.

But the expences of the buildings, as well as of the teachers, will, especially in the first instance, be very considerable. Dr. *Coke* will, therefore, take the liberty of waiting on those competent and benevolent persons, to whom he has the opportunity of conveying this plan for the civilization of the *Caribbs*, at their own houses, to receive any contributions they may think proper to make.

The *Doctor* has annexed a short but interesting account of the *Caribbs*, with which he was lately favoured: and he engages to the subscribers, that the money contributed for *this* institution, shall be most sacredly applied to the purpose designed, and *that only*; and trusts he shall be enabled, through the blessing of Divine Providence, to give the subscribers, not only a circumstantial, but also a pleasing account of the success of the undertaking.

*New Chapel, City-Road,
London.*

SUBSCRIPTIONS will be received by Messrs. *Taylor*
~~Hanbury~~, Lloyd, Bowman, and Co. Bankers, in
Lombard Street.

The Copy of a Letter from a Gentleman
in the Island of *St. Vincent* to the Re-
verend Mr. CLARKE, one of the Re-
verend Mr. WESLEY's Missionaries in the
West Indies, containing a short History
of the *Caribbs*.

Byera, St. Vincent, July 24, 1787.

DEAR SIR,

I Sincerely congratulate you on the rising
prospect of rendering the *Caribbs* of this
Island useful subjects, by giving them ideas of
Religion, enlarging their Understandings, and
introducing among them the useful Arts. We
have every advantage to expect from your pious,
well-meant endeavours. In a Christian coun-
try it is much to be regretted, that an attempt
of the kind has not sooner been made. What
awful disasters might have been prevented there-
by! This Island, by the combination of the *French*
and the *Caribbs*, was once brought under a fo-
reign yoke, and experienced all the inconveni-
ences and hardships of a conquered country.
This circumstance however has been possibly
attended with this good effect,—It has ren-
dered us more sensible of the blessings of a
British

British government, and, I sincerely hope, will open our eyes to our true interests in future.

You have requested that I would answer several inquiries concerning the *Caribbs*. I thank you for the opinion you have conceived of the manner in which I would conduct the inquiry ; and though sensible I am in some measure unequal to the task, I feel myself encouraged by your obliging confidence. A residence near the boundary for two years, some turn for observation, and the footing on which I stand with them, will, I flatter myself, apologize for the attempt.

By the best accounts which I have been able to collect from the *Caribbs* themselves, the *Black Caribbs* originally sprung from the cargo of a *Guinea* ship which was wrecked on one of the *Grenadilloes*. They were brought over to this island by the *Yellow Caribbs*, who were the *Aborigines* or native inhabitants, with many of whom they soon were connected, forming a motley mixture, such as we now see ; but in which the negro-colour and features chiefly prevail. They continued in this interchange of good offices, till such time as the *Black Caribbs* perceived their superiority to the others, in numbers
and

and strength, who then drove the *Yellow Caribbs* to the Leeward part of the Island, where a few of them only now remain. The greater part of the latter went to the Islands of *Tobago* and *Trinidad*, in both of which islands I have seen their posterity.

It is unnecessary to follow them through the detail of their wars and treaties with the *French*, who at length formed a settlement in the island. At the treaty of peace in 1763, the *Caribbs* possess the most valuable part of the island. By the treaty which was made with them in 1773, they gave up an extent of country, comprehending about fourteen miles in length, and from three to four in breadth; only part of which was settled in 1779, when the *French* invaded the island. Their jealousies and hatred of the *English*, which had been industriously kept up by the *French*, joined with some private causes of dissatisfaction, led them to take an active part against us; and the dread of their barbarities had no small effect in inducing the inhabitants so soon to capitulate. The settlements on the ceded lands were almost totally abandoned, after the most shocking cruelties had been exercised by the *Caribbs* on the wretched victims of their rage. The *French*, during the time that
the

the Island belonged to them, left the *Caribbs* in the quiet and peaceable possession of their lands. Since the island has been restored to us, we have once more attempted a settlement on the ceded lands, and hitherto without interruption; and we sincerely hope that the present good dispositions of the *Caribbs* will long continue.

It is a very difficult matter to fix precisely on their numbers, for reasons which are too obvious to need being mentioned. The best-informed on the subject speak with uncertainty. However, few have fixed their numbers below *five thousand*: I should rather suppose even that calculation to be short. From their temperance, their being unaccustomed to hard labour, the healthiness of the climate, their early marriages, and the fruitfulness of their women, we may easily account for their rapid increase.—We may add to these considerations, the fruitfulness of the soil, and the ease with which the few necessaries of life are procured.

It is a difficult matter to say what ideas they have of a Supreme Being. The *French* took but little pains to instruct them in Religion. They have some faint ideas of a Supreme Cause which created all things, but they conceive that God
commits

commits the government of the world to subordinate Spirits. They make use of several incantations against Evil Spirits, to prevent their malignant influence.

The *Black Caribbs*, differing so little from the negroes whom they saw employed in the occupations of the field, soon perceived the necessity of a discrimination founded on more obvious marks than that of complexion; and therefore adopted a plan of flattening their childrens' foreheads, which is done by applying to the forehead a small board defended by soft cotton, and tied behind. The child, the moment it is born, is submitted to this operation, which is continued for two or three months. Some exceptions are, however, to be made to this general rule. Twins, from a supposition of their being weakly, and children, who are sickly at their birth, are exempted. The operation is also longer continued upon the male, than on the female child. I have frequently seen horrid distortions of the countenance, squinting, &c. occasioned by the board's being unequally or ill applied.

The marriages of the *Caribbs* take place at an early age, and are generally made by the parents of both parties without consulting the inclinations

inclinations of the female; a house is erected for them, and the little furniture which they require, is provided. The wife is soon made acquainted with the labour of the field; she plants the cassada, the yams, potatoes, &c. and prepares and dresses them for the indolent male, whose sole occupation is either shooting wild pigeons, Indian rabbits, and manna-rous, (the *Opossa*), or fishing. When the husband finds himself in the situation of taking more wives, he obtains them from their parents: many of them have four or five. On that event, they build separate houses for each wife, spending their time alternately with them. So entirely, however, are the wives devoted to the despotism of their husbands, that quarrels among them are never known. Adultery is punished with death. In no part of the world are the women more chaste, owing, possibly, to the severity with which incontinence is punished.

When a husband leaves any of his wives, they are not at liberty to marry again till his death: in that case only is it in their power to make an election. No slavery can be conceived more wretched than that of the women, the whole labour without and within doors devolving on them. Nor is this all: Whenever frequent
child-

child-bearing, or any other cause, has made them look old or ugly, their husbands leave them for other wives; for whom, and their children, they are likewise obliged to do all the most laborious offices. Their husbands frequently, in their scenes of drunkenness and debauchery, wound and maim them with their cutlasses, and even shoot them.

Nor is there among them the smallest traces of policy or natural justice. The *Lex Talionis* is the only rule among them, provided the party has the power or abilities to redress himself. A few months ago a shocking instance happened in this neighbourhood. — *Manuel*, a *Caribb*, who lives on my estate, had a sister remarked for her beauty and handsome person by her sable lovers, of whom she had not a few. She could, however, be only the lot of one; and he to whose lot she fell, was the friend and intimate acquaintance of *Manuel*. Her husband and she lived for some time peaceably and comfortably together, till a quarrel happened between his sister and his wife: they proceeded to blows, when the husband interposed between them with his cutlass, made a push at his wife, and wounded her under the eye, of which wound she immediately expired. The only redress

dress which *Manuel* required for the loss of his sister, was——that the husband should put to death his own sister; which he did by carrying her down to the River *Colonie* in the forenoon, and murdering her with the greatest barbarity.

You are yourself acquainted with the other instance——of the chief of *Rabacca's* being wounded by his nephew, and of the latter's being put to death the same evening by his cousin. You have seen the uncle upon this estate, where he is now recovering from his wound.

The *Caribbs* are naturally temperate in their meals, their food chiefly consisting of roots and other vegetables, here produced by the indulgent hand of Providence in the utmost profusion. *Cassada*, however, furnishes them with the greatest supply, which they bake into cakes on thin plates of iron, procured from the *Europeans*. They make but little or no use of salt: sometimes only they indulge themselves with a kind of soup called *Tumallen*, which is prepared in a singular manner. They take equal parts of the juice of the *Cassada* (which, by the by, without this preparation is poisonous) and sea-water, with crabs or crawfish bruised, and a large proportion

proportion of pepper. The whole is well boiled, and used as sauce to their otherwise insipid *Cassadas*. At their feasts they use a fermented liquor prepared from Cassada, Pines, &c. called *Vikou* or *Ouicou*; the preparation of which is sufficiently disgusting to the sight of an *European*; the Cassada being sometimes previously chewed before infusion. The saliva occasions a quicker fermentation of the drink, which is soon fit for use. Since their acquaintance with the *Europeans*, the means of intoxication are more common.

Their houses were originally built of long, pliant boughs bent in a semicircular form, and fixed in the ground at each end, about fourteen feet in length, and twelve feet in breadth; and they are very neatly thatched with the leaves of the *Roseau*. Since their acquaintance with us, they have improved in the structure of their houses, which are now formed of hard wood posts fixed in the ground, plates and rafters; and are still thatched with the *Roseau* or *Reed*. The sides of them are wattled, and closely covered in, so as to exclude the wind. The doors are rudely formed out of the *White Cedar*, and move upon wooden pivots; for they employ very little iron in the fabrick.

The

The whole furniture of the house consists of seats formed out of logs, their hammocks, the calabash formed into cups and spoons, a cassada-grater, a serpentine press, a wooden trough, and a cassada-iron-plate, and sometimes a few articles of earthen-ware.

The whole labour of the field, as formerly mentioned, is performed by the women. The cassada-sticks are planted in little hillocks which they raise at two feet distance. At the end of nine or twelve months it is pulled up, clean-washed, scraped with a blunt knife, and rubbed on a grater, which is formed of a piece of board, into which small pebbles are stuck. One end of the grater leans against their breast, the other end declines into a large wooden trough, into which the grated cassada falls : it is then put into a press, which is very ingeniously made of the fibres of a plant resembling the wild plantain, and formed into the shape of a snake about the thickness of a man's thigh. The press being filled with the grated *cassada*, they suspend it from the house or from a tree, and affix weights to the other end, whereby the poisonous juice is strongly expressed : the *cassada* is then passed through a sieve which they likewise make very ingeniously, on a plate of iron put over a fire ;
and

and being strongly pressed with a wooden spatula, it forms itself into a cake, which, when sufficiently toasted on one side, is turned, and toasted on the other. — This makes the constant food of the *Caribbs*, except when the men can procure an *agouty* (an Indian rabbit), or a wild pigeon, or sometimes the crab or craw-fish, and at other times the sea-fish, which they are very dextrous in catching. But their principal dependence in respect to fish, is on those which they procure by poisoning the rivers: for this purpose the men of the whole district are summoned; part of whom are employed in procuring the plants which are used for that purpose, viz. the *dogwood-bark* or *erythrina linn*, and the *figesbeckia*: others divert the course of the river, if it is too large, leaving no more water than they conveniently can poison. The weeds are then strongly beat, and their juices expressed and mixed with the water, and presently communicate their inebriating effects to the finny inhabitants, which soon swim with their bellies on the surface of the water, and allow themselves to be easily taken. — It is observable, that though thousands of the young fry are destroyed, no ill effects ever happen from the use of the fish. This is a practice, however, which should be particularly discouraged, as it almost entirely destroys the fry.

Another

Another practice they observe, which is very destructive. The river-fish in these parts commence spawning their fry about the end of *July*, when they drop their ova at the mouths of the rivers, which are then crouded with innumerable shoals of sea-fish, such as snappers, groupers, king-fish, &c. The young fry instantly attempt to force their passage up the rivers, and are in such numbers as to blacken the waters. A single person may in a few hours catch a bushel of them. Hundreds of *Caribbs* may be then seen repairing to the rivers, and loading themselves with the *tritrixes* (so the *French* name them after the *Caribbs*).—— They are very delicious, and by drying in the sun will keep for some time.

The *Caribbs* in general, both men and women, go naked, with the exception of a piece of cloth a yard in length and about a foot broad, which they wear round their middle, open to the left side: this is always dyed of an orange colour with the *rocou*. The women also wear a garter below each knee, bound pretty tight. The unmarried women and the widows omit the right garter. Both sexes paint their bodies with streaks of *rocou*: the men only colour their faces black on certain occasions. But on all occasions the men
carry

carry with them a sabre or cutlass, and a loaded musket, which is ever on the cock. Quarrels are so frequent among them, that they are ever in dread of meeting with some one with whom they are at enmity. Murders and assassinations are therefore very frequent, and their animosities perpetually kept up. Every district of two or three miles in length, has its peculiar chief, who, however, has not the smallest shadow of authority, except in time of war.

They are very ingenious in making baskets, hammocks, and fishing-lines of the silk grass; but the principal article of their commerce is the tobacco, with which they chiefly supply the *Martinico*-market, where it is manufactured into a snuff called *Macouba*, from a district in *Martinico*, which formerly raised the best tobacco in the *West Indies*. From *Martinico* they import muskets, gunpowder, flints, ball, and cutlasses, some wine, and an inferior kind of rum called *Taffia*.

They carry on their intercourse in canoes of their own making; some of which are large enough to contain fifty of them. Nothing can equal their skill in managing them in the most tempestuous seas.

Their

Their intercourse with *Martinique* certainly tends to debauch their morals, and to increase that prejudice and aversion, which they have always had against the *English* government. As they speak the same language with the inhabitants of *Martinique*, and have been long acquainted with them, they have no jealousy or suspicion of any designs which they can entertain against their liberty, and therefore are the more ready to listen to their suggestions. It is at *Martinique* also where their wants are best supplied; and it is only there where they can vend their tobacco. The comparison of the *French* island with ours, in respect to wealth, population, shipping, grandeur, &c. is by no means in our favour.

But we cannot expect to have much intercourse with these people till publick schools are established to teach their children the *English* language, reading, and writing, and they are afterwards brought up to husbandry, or some trade or occupation. The girls may likewise be brought up, and taught by school-mistresses in sewing and knitting stockings. In the *Spanish* island of *Trinidad*, the Indians have been brought up and instructed in the principles of the Christian religion with great care and success. There is a remarkable

markable manufacture of stockings carried on by the *Spanish* Indians, which sell from three to six dollars per pair.

They have already got among them the *rocou*, which they manufacture and carry to *Martinique*. This also should be encouraged. The *la pitte*, or silk-grass, affords the strongest cords in nature, and the threads are so fine as to be employed in sewing cambric. With it they form fishing-lines. You had best send home some specimens of it. In short, the grand point at present to be aimed at is the civilization of them, and making them industrious, thereby rendering them first human beings before you attempt to make them Christians.

I commend your intention of acquiring a knowledge of their language. It is by no means difficult. The number of words are but few, sufficient to express the ideas of their savage life. Their language, like their natures, is harsh and dissonant. They speak with the utmost impetuosity, and as if they were constantly in a passion; but the *French* language is almost generally spoken by them.

Thus, my Dear Sir, I have given you an account of my savage neighbours; not such as I
would

would wish to present you with, but such as I was able, considering the short time I had to finish it in. As you wished to send it by the packet, I have had only a few hours to write on a subject, which required a longer time to have been properly digested.

That God Almighty may crown your pious endeavours with success, is the ardent wish of

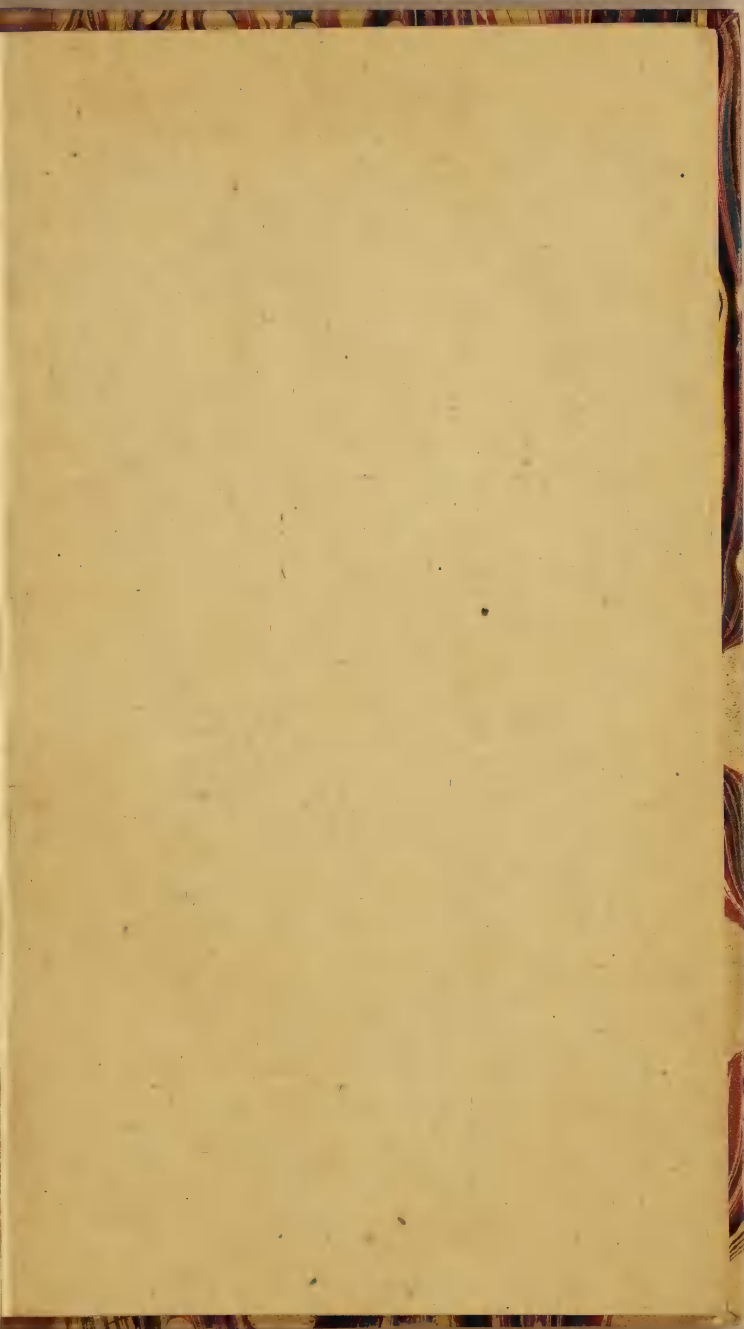
Your most obedient humble servant,

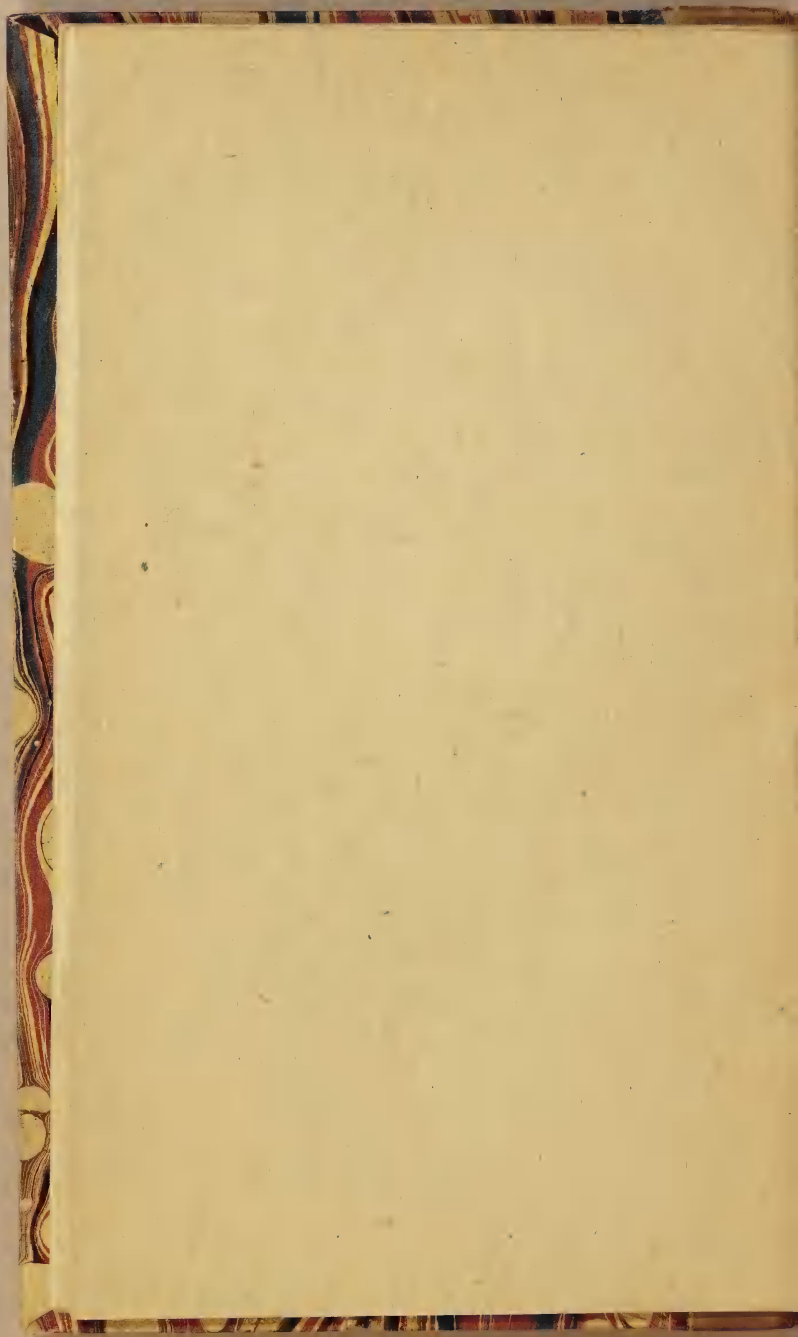
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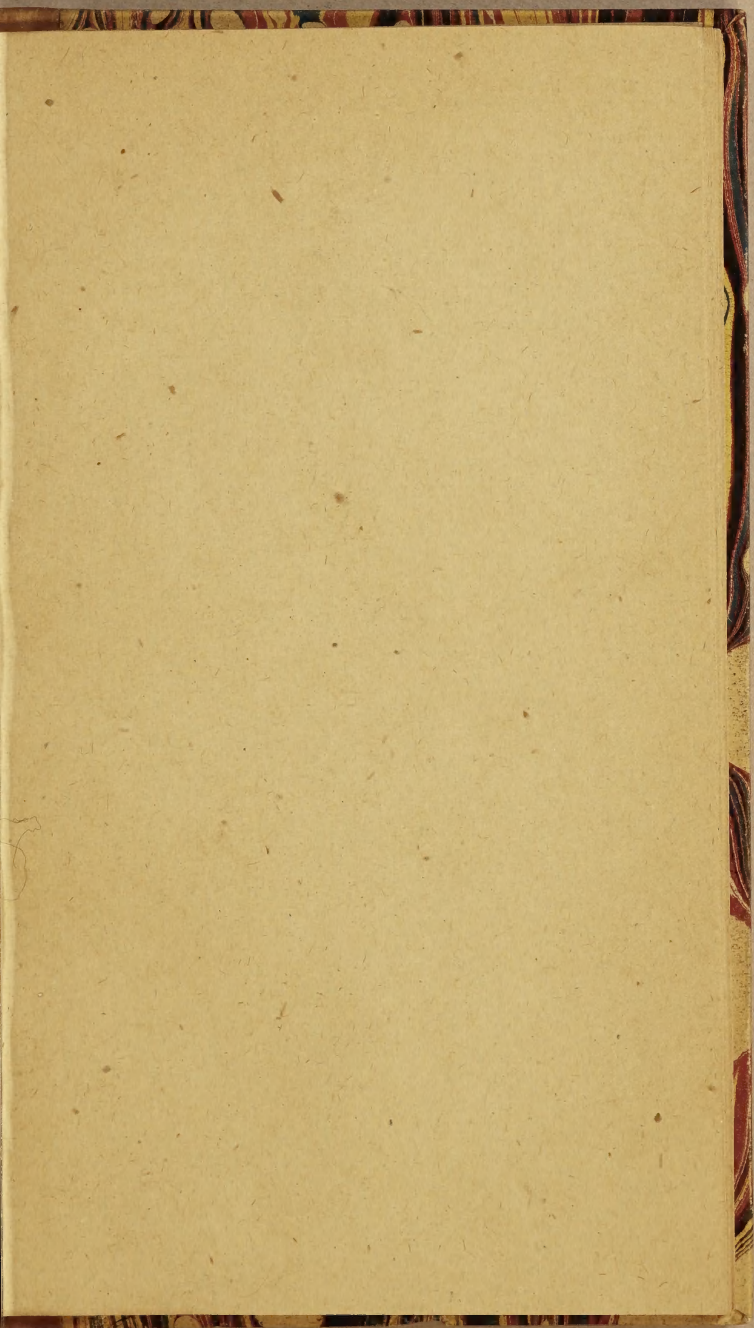
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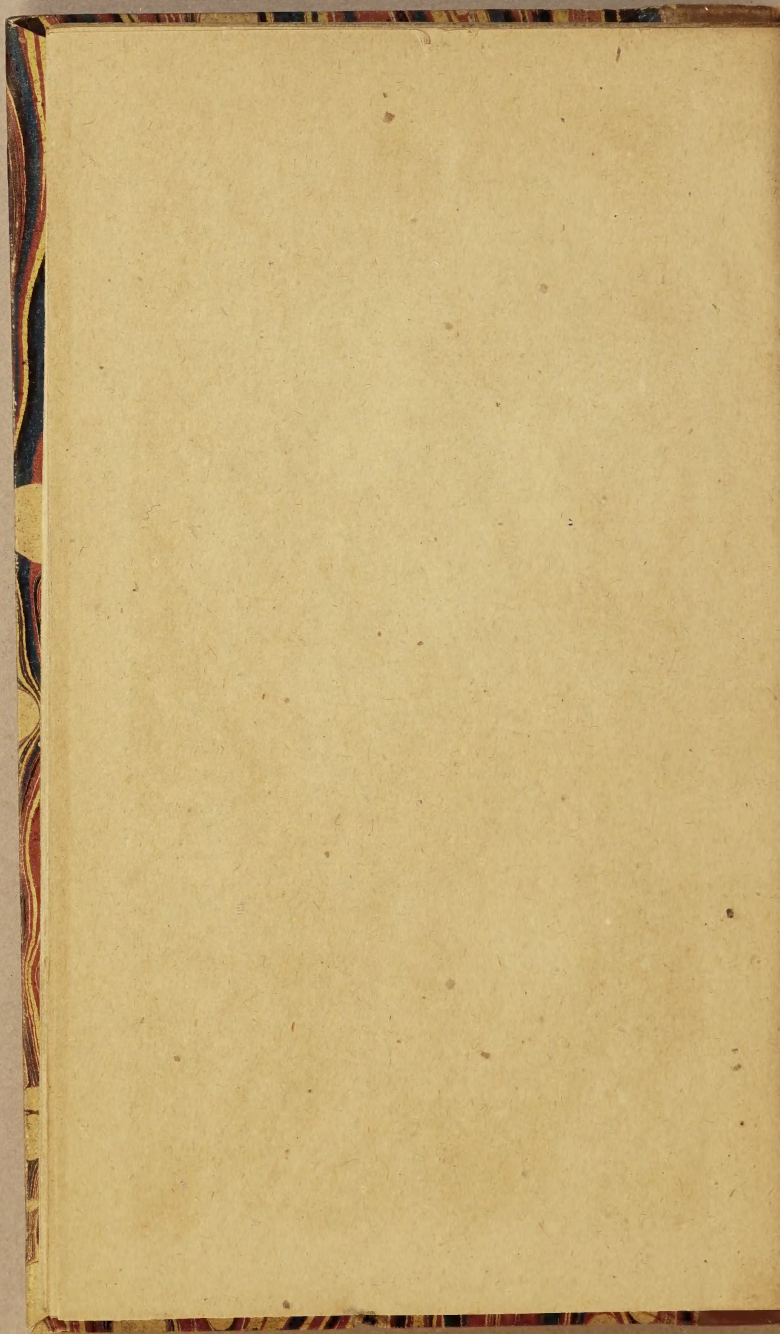
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